



The Planning Officer
Waverley Borough Council
BY EMAIL

10 October 2024

Dear Sir

Land North West of Meadfields Farm (PIP/2024/01880) - Objection

The Haslemere Society wishes to object to the above application on the following grounds:

1. The proposed development site lies outside the settlement boundary but within the Green Belt. The site is also within the buffer zones for the Wealden Heath II SPA and the East Hants SPA as well as the nearby ancient woodland. The site is also close to a wildlife corridor (as shown in the Haslemere Neighbourhood Plan, Appendix 3, Map 6). As the pictures submitted show, it is wooded, verdant and beautiful. The site is not, in any sense, 'grey belt'.
2. We note the applicant's arguments that despite lying outside the settlement boundary the site is within the 'wider settlement' and sustainable and therefore meets the terms of NPPF Paragraph 154(e) and should be permitted. We disagree, for the following reasons:
 - a. The recently-adopted Neighbourhood Plan set the settlement boundary to run along Three Gates Lane. The properties lying to the east of that line were intentionally left outside the boundary. As the text in the Plan makes clear, the settlement boundary was quite deliberately drawn to exclude Green Belt land with the express intention of inhibiting further development on that land and concentrating it instead in the more urban areas of the town. This expression of the community's views should carry significant weight.
 - b. We note the word "limited" in NPPF Paragraph 154(e), which makes it clear that merely being 'infill' is not, in itself, sufficient to overcome the more general requirement to demonstrate that the benefits of development outweigh the harm done to the Green Belt.
 - c. In addition to being on Green Belt outside the settlement boundary, the proposed site lies within the buffer zones for two SPAs and an ancient woodland. The applicant notes that formal mitigation measures are only required for developments of 20 or more dwellings, but this is not to say that smaller developments do no harm. Every additional dwelling in these areas adds to the

footfall, vehicular traffic, and noise and light pollution and, potentially, introduces pet cats or dogs, all of which have a detrimental impact on wildlife and on the character and serenity of the area. This argument may seem overblown for a single property, but the arguments being made by the applicant in this case could equally be made in respect of a number of other sites in the immediate area. Is it the contention that these could all be developed without harm to the SPA, the ancient woodland and the Green Belt? And if not, what makes this application special?

- d. The applicant has not demonstrated in any way that 'very special circumstances' attach to this application which would outweigh the harm done to the Green Belt and buffer zones by permitting this development. The reference to the required housing numbers is irrelevant; a single dwelling will make no material difference here and because this is Green Belt, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply (NPPF, Paragraph 11, Footnote 7).
3. The approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan is consistent with that in the Local Plan and in the NPPF in providing very strong protection to Green Belt land. The NPPF requires 'very special circumstances' to justify any development on such land and for any harm done by such development to be 'clearly outweighed' by other considerations. We contend that this test is not met here and urge the Council to reject this application.

Yours Sincerely

S. Dullaway (by email)
(on behalf of The Haslemere Society Planning Group)